

1999

# The McClure chronicles : an inquiry into pathfinders for the digital age

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31979/etd.z5ja-xvpe>

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THE MCCLURE CHRONICLES:  
AN INQUIRY INTO PATHFINDERS FOR THE DIGITAL AGE

A Project Report

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Library and Information Science

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Library and Information Science

by

Jo Falcon

May 1999

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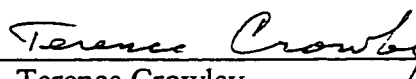
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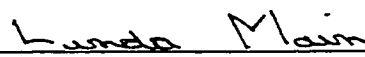
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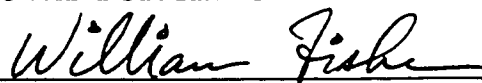
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## ABSTRACT

### THE MCCLURE CHRONICLES: AN INQUIRY INTO PATHFINDERS FOR THE DIGITAL AGE

by Jo Falcon

This project explores translating the librarians' traditional reference pathfinder into a digital format for use on the Internet. Since the first generation of "native users" of the Internet tends to discount libraries as a source of information, it was hoped that such a pathfinder could demonstrate that for some materials, they are the best resource. A sample website was developed based on the work of poet Michael McClure, who has both a large audience in the target age range and a substantial body of work in libraries – much of it out of print and otherwise unavailable. The website, <http://mcclure-manzarek.com>, includes an OPAC tutorial, MARC record, and use suggestions for librarians, as well as a biography, bibliography, and contextual material on the poet. This report discusses the design considerations, development and user response to the site.



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## **I. Proposal**

### **A. Introduction**

One of the librarian's oldest and most basic tools is the reference pathfinder. ALA's glossary defines these as "bibliographic guides that arrange in search-strategy order the various types of library resources available for doing a literature search on particular topics" (Young, 1983). A good pathfinder will not only familiarize the user with the resources available, but with the scope and structure of the topic itself. It assists the user in clarifying such questions as "What do I really want to know about this? How much do I want to know? What will be enough? What new aspects of the topic are revealed that I didn't know about?" Finally, since the pathfinder is the result of selection and evaluation of resources by an information professional, it can direct the user to the best of the available information, "saving the time of the reader" in accordance with the Fourth Law of Library Science (Ranganathan, 1964).

As the definition of "library resources" expands to include a wide range of non-print media, particularly the World Wide Web, the need for navigational aids becomes more acute. Simply identifying the resources available can become an enormous task. The need to decide how much of an answer is enough becomes significant when a search engine may return many thousands of hits for a simple question. And the quality and relevance of those hits is an unknown, perhaps unknowable factor. Far from being selected and evaluated by an informed, trained professional, the websites returned by most search engines are indexed only by word-frequency logarithms. This guide, poor at best, can be and often is subverted by the use of meta-tags and/or hidden text designed to

attract as many hits as possible, regardless of any relevance of the document to the search query. Even if a hit does appear to be valid, its authority will usually be unclear. "Saving time" by providing enough, but not too much, quality information, is not what the Web is about. That is the task of the librarian or information professional. And it is *exactly* the purpose of a reference pathfinder.

Budget and time demands on library staff limit the amount of individualized attention a librarian can spend with each patron. This would seem to make self-help tools such as pathfinders potentially even more useful. Or does it? Can pathfinders be made to encompass such diverse material as websites, gophers, and web-based interactive media? Do "cybrarians" and electronic media specialists still think in such terms? Do potential reference patrons have the attention span to use them, and the degree of information literacy necessary to appreciate *evaluated* information?

These questions have particular relevance when considering "20-something" or "Generation X" information seekers who are native users of electronic media. Surveys such that performed by the Benton Foundation, in *Buildings, Books, and Bytes*, find that teenagers and young adults raised with the Internet have a substantially different cluster of information seeking behaviors from their predecessors, and tend not to think of using a library first, or perhaps at all:

...the youngest Americans polled, those between the ages of 18 and 24, are the least enthusiastic boosters of maintaining and building library buildings.

They are also the least enthusiastic of any age group about the importance

of libraries in a digital future. And they voted to spend their money on personal computer disks rather than contribute the same amount in tax dollars to the library for purchasing digital information for home use (Benton Foundation, 1996; paragraph 8 of unpaginated electronic text).

Catherine Lee, in particular, specifically mentions pathfinders in concluding that "... a different form of library services might be needed. In particular, the way in which libraries provide information to patrons (e.g. pathfinders) should be redesigned to meet these new characteristics" (Lee, 1996).

## **B. Literature review**

A search in mid-1998 of recent library literature, computer journals and the popular press showed a great deal of concern about the difficulties of finding specific topical information on the Internet, but little on providing topical or subject guides. Much of the non-library material assumed that search engines were the primary tool, mentioning subject indexes such as Librarians' Index to the Internet and Yahoo only as an afterthought. LibraryLit offered more discussion of structured searching, with 108 articles returned for a search on "pathfinder"<sup>1</sup> and 250, using the natural language option, for "using Internet or web for research". However, most of the "pathfinder" articles were examples of pathfinders for a given subject rather than examinations of the concept, and articles found under the other strategy tended, again, toward search engines.

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<sup>1</sup> Actually, "pathfinder not Mars not Time-Warner" in order to weed out references to the recent Martian Sojourner mission or to the proprietary indexing software.

The weaknesses of search engines *per se* have been discussed at interminable length in the information science literature: uneven coverage of the available resources, inability to ascertain true precision, openness to misleading meta-tags, lack of flexibility, failure in most cases to offer synonyms or a thesaurus when the search term is not found, and many others. However, many authors look to the powerful sorting abilities of search-engine software to generate automated pathfinders on the fly – particularly *within* a given library, where the selection and accession process prevents a profusion of irrelevant hits.

As early as 1985, William E. Jarvis suggested creating a preformatted guide to search strategy in which a user's own search could be embedded, and printed out for further use (Jarvis, 1985). (At this stage of the Internet's evolution, not all libraries had online catalogs, few made them publicly accessible, and the graphical user interface Mosaic was some eight years in the future.) Recent variations on this idea include Steve Sloan's Virtual Pathfinder (Sloan, 1996). This PERL script accepts the search term as a variable with which to create an HTML document, embedding the resulting hypertext links in a text explanation of how to search. Another variation on the theme is software such as BookWhere 2000, which searches "hundreds of library collections" for "virtually all information cataloged by libraries" ("RIS announces BookWhere 2000," 1998, p. 44). Note that these examples all maintain initial selection of the resources by a library as a guarantor that the citations found have some authority. Attempting to apply a wholly-automated "virtual pathfinder" program to the full range of available resources, including the Web and Internet, would mean loss of this safeguard.

With subject indexes such as the Librarians' Index to the Internet (<http://www.sunsite.berkeley.edu/InternetIndex/>), the Internet Public Library's subject guides (<http://www.ipl.org/>), Best Information on the Internet (<http://www.wau.edu/CWIS/Internet/Wild/index.html>), and the Argus Clearinghouse topical guides (<http://www.clearinghouse.net/index.html>), authority is not in question. These are produced by information professionals whose qualifications and institutional affiliations are clearly stated. The resources are evaluated and re-evaluated for currentness on a regular basis, and criteria are clearly explained on the site. Subject indexes of this kind tend to cover broad topics, with an objective description of the resources to be found, a more subjective evaluation of their quality, and – sometimes – a sense of the indexer's personality: whose opinion you are following, and why you can trust it.

That sense of personality is more pronounced in the many less reliable indexes at the "my list'o'links" level. Often containing inadequate or incorrect information and plagued with dead or disconnected hyperlinks, these may be only marginally preferable to "throwing yourself on the mercy of the Net"<sup>2</sup> with a search engine. However, the best of the "amateur" subject indexes can be very useful resources, as with Levi Asher's "Literary Kicks" website on the Beat Generation at <http://www.charm.net/~brooklyn/>. A huge, sprawling site with little in the way of formal structure, it combines a good basic overview of the topic with more detailed resources on specific individuals, a "news" page, and room for feedback from its readers. The fact that these less formal indexes generally cover a

---

<sup>2</sup> Head, Alison. Personal communication, Oct. 24, 1998.

more defined topic helps them keep a sense of personal immediacy, and can foster a kind of virtual community of interest that may be as close as one comes, in cyberspace, to the clearly defined "subject-specific research community" as required by Patrick Wilson in his definition for a pragmatic bibliography (White, Bates & Wilson, 1992). In theory, the knowledge base accrued over time through feedback from such a group would compensate, at least in part, for the impossibility of real-time reference interviews in keeping the site relevant to user needs.

In addition to the literature cited above, I have reviewed examples of standard printed pathfinders, from Clark Library's 1893 example (Gordy, 1893) to a recent hybrid form in print (Klein, 1997) which includes URLs as well as bibliographic data for off-line media. Some of the better examples of Web-based pathfinders are at The Exploratorium's Hypatia (<http://hypatia.exploratorium.edu:6611>); though limited largely to science resources, this OPAC is an excellent example for structure, and many searches retrieve selected web resources (from the museum's own award-winning website) along with tangible items in the collection. These discussions and examples were taken into account in creating the McClure website. I suspected, at a preliminary point in my research, that the final product would partake of both a pathfinder and a virtual special collection, but that is still difficult to determine as the site continues to evolve.

### **C. Methodology**

This project explored how the pathfinder concept could be redefined for the digital age. The obvious first step was to move it from print form to the Web – but it is not



sufficient merely to add HTML to existing text. In the words of one librarian who tried just that,

The lessons of watching too many bad movies made from good books come to mind. When you set out to design something, you must respect the medium in which you are working... Designing for the Web is different from writing a paper document (Sloan, 1996, p. 53).

The web-based pathfinder should, at minimum, use the new technologies to encompass hyperlinks to relevant websites, gopher archives (an overlooked and still valid resource) and online newspapers and e-zines. Depending on the sources available online for a given topic, this could make such a pathfinder a virtual special collection. It would take advantage of the "do it yourself" tendencies of Web users, offering a brief tutorial on effective Web searching – as distinct from surfing. Since many libraries are moving to web-based, graphical OPACs, it could also include a unit on how to access and search the OPACs of libraries willing to loan materials on the topic. From the librarians' standpoint, a web-based subject pathfinder that includes its own MARC record could easily be adopted into the catalog of any library with an interest in the subject.

The subject for such a qualitative inquiry should be one for which libraries have a demonstrated affinity and existing resources, but which is also likely to interest information-seekers who are simply exploring the Web on their own. Given the challenge posed by Generation X, a topic that could lead some of these people into libraries would be a plus.

To that end, I chose to create a pathfinder website on the work of Michael McClure, a poet and playwright who came to prominence with the Beat Generation and whose work has more recently included spoken word performances with piano backup. Well represented in libraries with an oeuvre spanning over forty years, he has found a new audience in the target age group for his spoken-word performances with spontaneously improvised piano accompaniment by Ray Manzarek, composer, music producer, and former keyboardist with a groundbreaking rock band of the late 1960s, The Doors.

Indeed, Generation X seems fascinated by the Beat Generation, as demonstrated by the appropriation of Beat imagery by advertising campaigns aimed at 20-somethings: Torani flavored syrups (covers of imagined Beat paperbacks), Levis jeans (coffeehouse poetry readings, with bongos), Lucky Strike cigarettes (artists' garret and coffeehouse settings), and Nike (cameo appearance by William Burroughs in a TV commercial), to name only a few. The resurgence in fashion of such Beat signifiers as the "soul patch" or goatee, and the quotations from Beat icons (including McClure) by Gen-X bands such as Sonic Youth, Blake Babies, Jawbreaker, They Might Be Giants, 10000 Maniacs, and REM further support this hypothesis. Similarly, the work of jazz musicians such as the Marcus Shelby Trio and Henry Rollins (whose Noir Records is also a publisher of poetry and essays) holds clear echoes of the place of jazz in Beat culture.

Nor is this interest limited to 20-somethings, as was evidenced by the capacity crowds at the Beat traveling show recently hosted by San Francisco's De Young Museum (of which an overview is available at <http://www.thinker.org/exhibitions/beat/index.html>).

Amazon.com shows a current inventory of 131 titles on the Beats, including three audiotapes, a laserdisc and a music CD. That some 58 of these are out of print, and several (including four McClure titles) are special reissues, indicates that Amazon's market is demanding this material. Two comprehensive academic bibliographies of resources on the Beats have been published in the last three years (Klein, 1997; Handman, 1995). A bibliographic teaching guide published barely a year ago is already sold out and being reprinted (Lawlor, 1998). Academic special collections include the Allen Ginsberg papers, at Stanford University and SUNY Stonybrook; the Jack Kerouac Libraries at the Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics at Boulder, Colorado and the University of Massachusetts at Lowell; the Henry Miller Memorial Library at Big Sur; and the Contemporary Literature Collection at Simon Fraser University (Canada). Lawrence Ferlinghetti, a founder of the Beat movement, is currently Poet Laureate of San Francisco, a city with over a dozen streets named for Beat writers and artists.

Michael McClure, in particular, provides a continuity from the Beats through the present. Somewhat younger than the big three, Ginsberg, Kerouac, and Burroughs, he was better able to understand and embrace rock music and its culture as the Eisenhower years segued into the New Age. (Indeed, his friendship with Ray Manzarek and other members of the Doors goes back to the mid-1960s, when McClure and lyricist/lead singer Jim Morrison worked together on a never produced screenplay, *The Adept*.) His continuing connection with younger writers, musicians and artists, including those in his classes at California College of Arts and Crafts, has both kept him in touch with the concerns of each subsequent generation, and kept him in the awareness of its members.

His major themes – deep ecology, humans as part of the mammal world, the spirituality of the physical – are now shared by a far wider public than when, in 1955, he first read "Death of 100 Whales" at the Six Gallery. Nor is his popularity hurt by his lean good looks and dramatic sense of costume and image.

These factors, coupled with the availability of resources in San Francisco (including use of the Beat Writers special collection at the North Beach branch of San Francisco Public Library as a trial site, and the cooperation of the subject himself) and my prior research on the topic, made this an attractive subject for such an exploration.

The proposal for this project, therefore, envisioned creation of a prototype web-based pathfinder on McClure's work, with a clearly identifiable domain name (<http://mcclure-manzarek.com>). The site was to include:

1. a "front door" based on the McClure/Manzarek performances, which would include a concert schedule, audio and perhaps video footage;
2. a small, well-chosen group of links to such sites as the Electronic Poetry Center, Literary Kicks, and the archive of McClure's work at Simon Fraser University;
3. an annotated evaluative bibliography and URLography, pointing out how much material is available in other forms than the Web;
4. brief tutorials on how to locate and use OPACs;

sample MARC record for the site as a whole, available for adoption into the OPAC of any library that chooses to catalog electronic resources;<sup>3</sup>

6. as appropriate on sub-pages, clickable links to meta-information for librarians;
7. unobtrusive "hit counters" on pages within the site, to monitor what portions of it are being used most heavily;
8. a feedback section in which to solicit readers' and librarians' comments on their experience with this tool, and suggestions for its refinement.

Since the primary purpose of this website was as a research tool and information retrieval site, not as a state-of-the-art technical showcase, use of audio and video was kept to the minimum consistent with attracting interested web surfers. A certain visual and technical "coolness" threshold was necessary regardless of the emphasis on content, and too much overt didacticism would have defeated the purpose. Nevertheless, the content is the focus. I was also concerned that the material be available as widely as possible, and designed the site to be compliant with guidelines for universal access for people with disabilities and for low-end computer systems. This precluded use of certain applications which are not available in public libraries running Lynx, or which interfere with assistive technology such as JAWS or other screenreader programs. The intent throughout was to create a clear, accessible, and useable resource that would repay sustained attention, not an MTV splash screen.

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<sup>3</sup> I am indebted to Dr. Nancy Olson, Mankato State University, Minnesota, for her suggestions and assistance with this aspect of the project, and to Rose Falanga and her staff at the Exploratorium Learning Studio for the opportunity to test it on their WebPAC.

## II. Process

### A. Designing and Prototyping

The first task undertaken was to choose the meta-tags or indexing terms for the site. Defining these would help me to clarify my intentions, as well as being the means by which Web search engines would later lead users to the site. The adequate but not exhaustive list settled, after consultation with two catalogers and an Internet indexer, at the following:

```
<META name="keywords" content="Michael McClure, Michael McLure, Ray  
Manzarek, Ray Manzarak, Ray Manzerek, McClure and Manzarek, Allen  
Ginsberg, Jim Morrison, poem, poems, poetry, spoken word, beat generation, beat  
writers, beatnik, LoveLion, Love Lion, Third Mind, The Doors, piano jazz, improv  
piano, jazz with poetry">
```

Note the inclusion of the most common misspellings of each name. (Manzarek later gave me a full page of ways to misspell his.) The names of Allen Ginsberg and Jim Morrison were added late and reluctantly, after this message from a librarian with a background in real estate:

...since Manzarek and McClure have produced "In Memoriam: Jim Morrison", would it be untoward to include a Morrison entry in the meta-tag keywords? I realize that using Morrison as a metatag is probably imprudent, if viewed from the standpoint of a strict cataloger. But I'm NOT a strict cataloger--when you get right down to it, I'm still a huckster. Speaking as a huckster, it'd get you a helluva lot more hits.

(Clarke, 2/2/99)

From the standpoint of outreach to the web audience who might not know of McClure, or even Manzarek, except for the Morrison/Doors connection, this seemed worth bending the rules. "More hits" as an end in itself was not a valid reason for the addition, but a

Morrison keyword would certainly reach users whose reference questions began with "whatever became of...?"

As the proposal made clear, the intent was to create a clearly organized reference tool, with special effects used minimally for their help in attracting those users for whom text alone is not sufficient. "Coolness" was not a goal. Since the content concerns the live performances of a poet and a jazz pianist, and their contention that poetry reaches its audience in a different way when combined with music, it seemed only fair – even necessary – to include videos of these performances. However, it was an early and firm decision to avoid gratuitous animations, Javascript, mouseover and popup effects, and the like, both because they were unlikely to add to the usability of the site and because they would make portions of it inaccessible to users with low-end computer systems or with certain kinds of adaptive technology. Furthermore, such additions could complicate the conversion of the site to XML in the future – a conversion which should make the site even more effective as a reference resource.

Graphic design was similarly considered in terms of effectiveness in conveying content, rather than "coolness." Since numerous studies, primarily by the User Interface Engineering group (Spool et al., 1998) indicate that the default conventions for link color (blue = link, red = active link, purple = link already visited) are the single tool most depended upon by users, the color scheme should work well with that convention. Since many of the available photographs are black and white, any background colors or images should be sufficiently subtle as not to overwhelm them. One of the subjects, McClure, evinced a desire for "something Egyptian or Zen-looking, or a combination." Within the

above constraints, I created a sample "front page" in each of the two styles which met the criteria for link convention and background color. These are reproduced here, though with some distortion of color, as Figures 1 and 2. When the papyrus background of the prototype Egyptian page was mistaken for matzoh, the Zen alternative, a stone "seki tei" dry garden, was chosen. Further development was then put on hold till the outline of the site as a whole was explored.

The overall structural design of the site was begun only after a thorough review of Information Architecture (Rosenberg & Morville, 1998) and the "Paper Prototyping" workbook from User Interface Engineering (Spool & Scanlon, 1999). Both works aim at making structural and navigational difficulties foreseeable and therefore avoidable by "pre-testing" the design before actual HTML work is begun. Using the UIE principles and pasted-up printouts of the prototype page, I worked out a very basic site map. This was based on two general areas of the site ("public" and "backstage") and three main branches from the front page: the McClure section, the Manzarek section, and the collaboration between them, "Third Mind." This was then tested with the help of a fellow librarian (Patricia Horn Fell, who also advised on cataloging the site), a skilled Internet user (technical writer William E. Spears, who also wrote the CGI script for the feedback form to be described later), and an Internet neophyte, McClure himself. (Figure 3 displays the site map in its current form.)

Another strong influence was the work done by Dinah Sanders on the SJSU SLIS website redesign (<http://witloof.sjsu.edu>) and her own Metagrirl site (<http://www.metagrirl.com>), an exploration of "a system to facilitate standards and



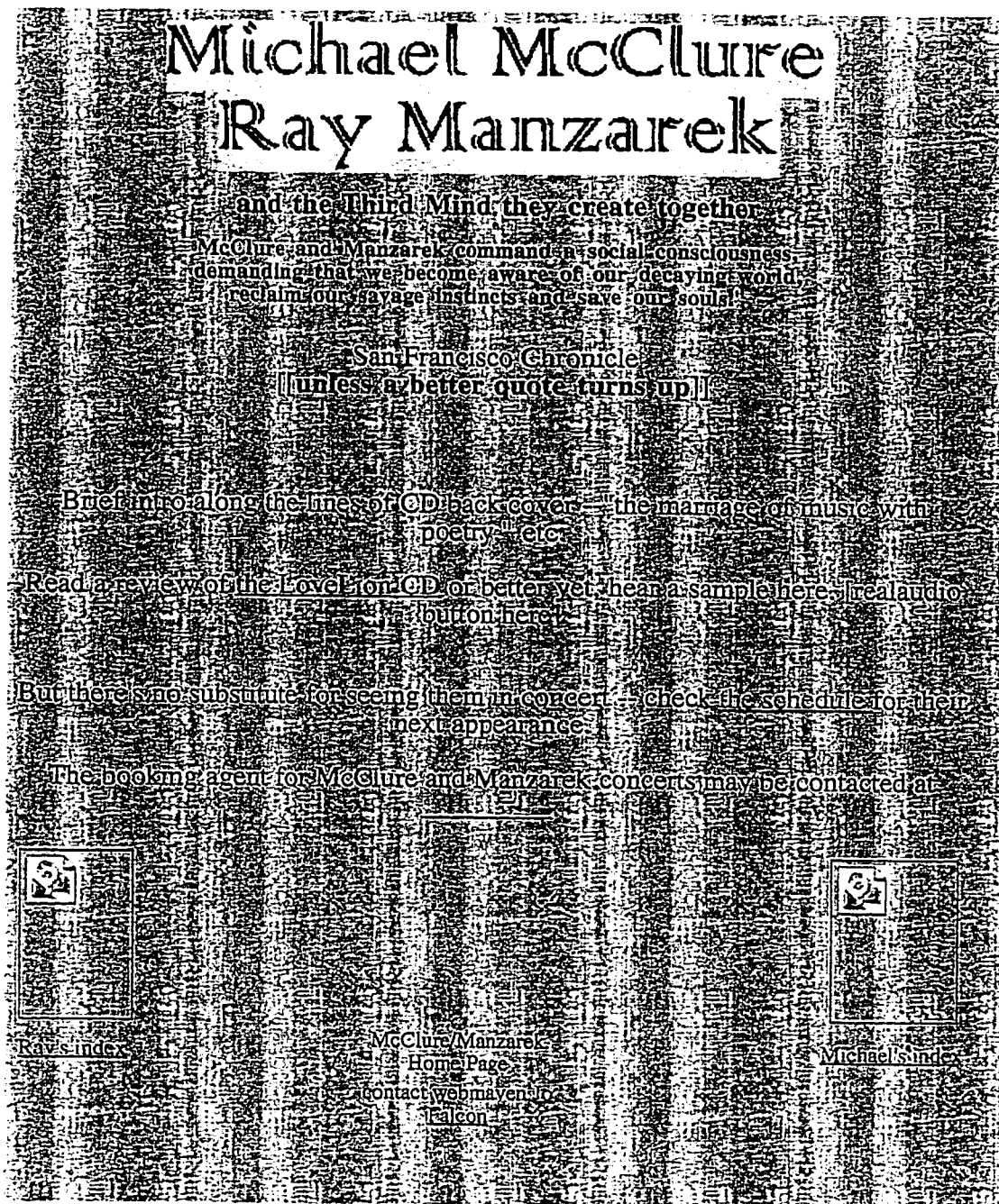


Figure 1. Prototype "Egyptian" page

# Michael McClure Ray Manzarek

and the Third Mind they create together



McClure and Manzarek command a social consciousness, demanding that we become aware of our decaying world, reclaim our savage instincts and save our souls.

John Aiello, San Francisco Chronicle

Brief intro along the lines of CD back cover -- "the marriage of music with poetry," etc.

Read a review of the LoveLion CD or better yet, hear a sample here. [realaudio button here]

But there's no substitute for seeing them in concert -- check the schedule for their next appearance.

The booking agent for McClure and Manzarek concerts may be contacted at



Ray's index

McClure/Manzarek  
Home Page  
contact webmaven Jo  
Falcon



Michael's index

Figure 2. Prototype "Zen" page

## Site Map

probably under perpetual construction



Main Page (includes one 1.5 MB video) links to:

Michael McClure's page

- recent books
- earlier works (links to The OPAC Explainer, how to find out-of-print books in libraries)
- biography and context, links to McClure Biography

Ray Manzarek's Page (one 1.9 MB video; links to Quicktime download)

- recent books
- earlier works (links to Manzarek Discography at another site)
- biography and context, links to Manzarek Biography

Third Mind collaboration (one 1.3 MB video; links to Quicktime download)

- reviews
- comments by artists

Concert Schedule (updated at least weekly)

Linked only from the Navigation table at bottom of each page:

About this site: Statement of purpose, design process notes, request for feedback

For Librarians: MARC record, cataloging suggestions, this site as a reference pathfinder

Site Map: (you are HERE)

Complex pages have a table of contents at the top which includes a link to the overall navigation bar at the bottom.




Figure 3. Sitemap

consistency within websites" (Sanders, 1998). The current project had originally been envisioned as a collaboration, with Sanders doing the technical work and web design while I concentrated on the content and reference resource aspects. Though that never came to pass, our discussions helped me conceptualize the site. Certain design elements, notably the use of a very small icon indicating that a link leads out of the site, owe a great deal to her ideas.

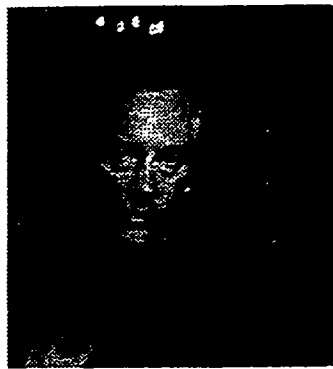
The sections within each artist's page (Recent Books and CDs, Earlier Work, Biography and Context) emerged from discussions with a wide variety of librarians, potential users of the site, the testing group noted above, and all the fellow students who asked about the project while it was still in the conceptualization stage. The distinction between recent and earlier work directly reflects the two angles from which reference questions were likely to come: "whatever became of...?" and "I just found out about \_\_\_\_ and I want more." The "Context" heading was added when it became clear that "Biography" was not enough. McClure and Manzarek are seen as representing two very different generations, and the challenge was to show their commonality. (The McClure page, reproduced as Figure 4, shows these subdivisions.)

With the overall structure set forth and a skeletal site map in place, I began fleshing out the pages and getting a feel for where I could make connections to the more straightforwardly library-related portions of the website: the acknowledgement that out-of-print poetry can be difficult to find *except* in libraries, the discussion of online public access catalogs, the selected bibliography, and the cataloging and other information directed specifically to information professionals. In McClure's case, this was easy. The


On this page: [recent books and CDs](#) | [earlier work](#) | [biography](#) | [to rest of site](#)

This image  at the end of any link indicates that the link takes you off the McClure/Manzarek metasite.

## More about **Michael McClure**



### Recent books:

**Touching the Edge: Dharma Devotions from the Hummingbird Sangha**  McClure's unique perspective on American Zen Buddhism. Shambala Press; available April 15, 1999.

**Huge Dreams** A reprinting of *STAR* and *The New Book/A Book of Torture*, both out of print for thirty years, "which together are a cornerstone of the Beat movement." Penguin Press, expected early May 1999.

**Rain Mirror** new poems in the spirit of McClure's nature-centered romantic mysticism. New Directions Press, September 1999.

A **BOOK TOUR SCHEDULE** link will be added here soon.

### Earlier Works:

Since Michael McClure has been publishing since 1956, many of his poetry collections and both the novels are out of print and available only in libraries (or an *exceptional* used book store). And relatively little of this enormous body of work is available on the web.

Figure 4a. Michael McClure main page

**The OPAC Explainer** offers help in finding these earlier works.

**Love Lion** The signature poem for the CD and video of the McClure/Mazarek performances. Like much of McClure's poetry, it is bilaterally symmetrical on the page: "a poem has a spine, like a mammal."

**Almost 50 poems** representing all McClure's books of poetry and including selections from his play *The Beard*. This site also includes essays, excerpts from a symposium on his work in 1975, and "Further Considerations," an ongoing continuation of the symposium.

**The Electronic Poetry Center** at University of Buffalo has a different selection of poems.

**A bibliography of McClure's work** by Lev Asher and Kelly Nagle -- unfortunately, only current to 1986. He's very prolific, and there's been as much again, maybe more. If you're working on an similar bibliography, or know someone who is, please e-mail the Webmaven and let me know about it!

**Archives** Simon Fraser University's Contemporary Literature Collection (British Columbia, Canada) is the official repository of Michael McClure's archives.

## **Biography and Context**

**Literary Kicks** the leading website resource on the Beat Generation, includes links to many of the other writers and artists McClure has influenced and been influenced by since the groundbreaking Six Gallery reading in 1955.

**The Beat Writers Collection**, at the North Beach branch of the San Francisco Public Library, celebrates the Beats in their own neighborhood. The website includes a map of many of the landmarks of the Beat era. (The "off this site" arrow above is adapted from the logo of City Lights Books, the first paperback-only bookstore and Ground Zero for the Beat movement on the west coast.)

**University of California at Berkeley's collection** of audio and video materials on the Beats, including the excellent "BackBeat" link on their social and political background.

**The North Beach Coffeehouse Scene** as remembered by McClure and others.

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Figure 4b. McClure main page, cont'd.

The Michael McClure/Ray Manzarek Metasite: McClure Home Page

[About Ray Manzarek](#)

[McClure/Manzarek Home  
Page](#)

[About Michael McClure \(you  
are here\)](#)

[For Librarians](#)

[About this site](#)

[contact webmaven Jo Falcon](#)

[Site map](#)

Last updated 3/16/99

Visitor Count: 156

Figure 4c. McClure main page, cont'd .

division of each artist's page into "Recent Books" and "Earlier Work" invited the comment that many of his earlier works are out of print, which lead easily into the OPAC and bibliography page (Figure 5). For Manzarek, I was fortunate to find a quotation in his autobiography which listed a number of the Beat writers, ending with "I suggest you read them all."

The "backstage" areas of the site, "For Librarians" and "About this site," were first to be roughed out, though both went through many revisions. The "For Librarians" area was a basic element of the initial proposal, a way to speak to colleagues about the purpose and potential of the site. (The MARC cataloging data went up first, simply because it was a clearly-defined "chunk" of information.) "About this site" gave me an opportunity to explain the site to users, and a place for the feedback form. However, the distribution of information between these two pages was problematic at first.

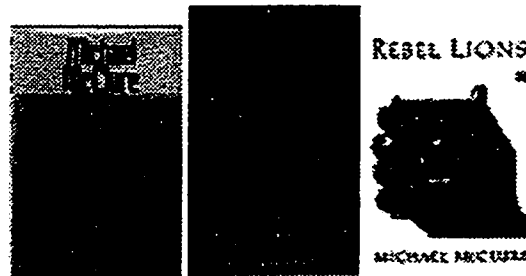
My initial impulse was to write "About" as a greatly condensed version of the Introduction and Overview sections of the proposal, leading directly into the explanation of OPACs and the advantages of searching an indexed record rather than doing a full-text search of the Web. When I found myself rambling on about the glories of MARC, I realized the need to address two separate audiences, each in their own language.

At that point, the material sorted itself out neatly into the suggestions to librarians on how to use the site as a reference resource (Figure 6), and a "backstage tour" for users who found the site intriguing enough to go beyond the primary content pages. Because this tour addressed the concept of metadata, principles of searching, human-computer



On this page: [what's an OPAC?](#) | [books in McClure biography](#) | [books in Manzarek biography](#) | [to rest of site](#)

This image  at the end of any link indicates that the link takes you off the McClure/Manzarek metasite.




## OPACs, Footnotes, and where to find the books.

This page links from the McClure main page and biographies of both the artists. If you just want the list of books mentioned or quoted in the biography, the citations are below.

[Books that inspired Manzarek](#) [Books mentioned in McClure biography](#)

Many of the books that I refer to in this website are out of print -- but you can still find them at the library. And many libraries have web-based catalogs you can search from home. Not sure if your local library does? You can use the low-tech but reliable method and phone them, or see if they're listed on the

[St. Joseph County \(Indiana\) list](#)  of public libraries with web, gopher, or telnet access. If the CGI search isn't working, here's a hint: most public library addresses in the United States take the form

[whatever]pl.lib.[state].us

-- for example, the one linked above is

<http://sjcpl.lib.in.us/> [St. Joseph County Public Library.Library.Indiana.United States].

Figure 5a. OPAC Explainer page

San Francisco's is <http://sfpl.lib.ca.us/> (don't miss their North Beach branch Beat Writers collections).

Once you've connected, follow the instructions that particular library offers (most of them are very similar) to see if the book you want is available. If not, there's always Interlibrary Loan.

If you're not looking for a particular title, but for anything by or about McClure, the OPAC can search by keyword in a more precise way than, for example, most web search engines do.

The "For Librarians" page of this site demonstrates the level of detail librarians use in cataloging a book or other document (and could use on websites...) Depending on the particular OPAC software, you may be able to search in a particular part of the catalog record -- like the contents notes, which would let you find a particular song no matter what CD, tape, or flat plastic record it was on.

To use examples from the OPAC at my alma mater, San Jose State University's School of Library and Information Science, a search by author for "McClure, Michael " gets you 16 records, including books by other people for whom he wrote introductions. The same search by keyword looks at different parts of the record and finds an anthology of six Beat poets. Try it yourself at

The SJSU OPAC



## Footnotes to the McClure biography page:

(back to top)

### *Works by Michael McClure:*

#### **The Adept**

Berkeley: Small Press Distribution 1971

-- out of print, available in libraries

#### **The Beard & VKTMS : two plays**

New York: Grove Press, 1985.

-- out of print, available in libraries

Figure 5b. OPAC Explainer, cont'd.

**Josephine : the Mouse Singer**

New York: New Directions Pub. Corp., 1980.

-- out of print, available in libraries

**Lighting the Corners: On Art, Nature, & the Visionary**

Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press: 1994: The American Poetry Series

-- available in libraries, most bookstores

**The Mad Cub**

New York : FoxRock/Blue Moon Books, 1996

-- Anniversary edition of a novel originally published in 1966.

If you find a good copy of the original, insure it!

**Rebel Lions**

New York: New Directions Pub. Corp., 1991

-- available in libraries, most bookstores

**Scratching the Beat Surface: Essays on New Vision  
from Blake to Kerouac**

New York : Viking Penguin, 1994

-- available in libraries, most bookstores

**Selected Poems**

New York: New Directions Pub. Corp., 1986

-- available in libraries, most bookstores. New 1999 edition forthcoming from New American Library/Dutton Books.

**Touching the Edge**

Boston : Shambhala Publications, Incorporated 1999

-- due in bookstores April 15.

*By other authors:*

Morrison, Jim, 1943-1971.

**The Lords, and The New Creatures, poems.**

New York: Simon and Schuster 1970, reissued 1980

-- available in libraries, some bookstores


Crick, Francis, 1916-

**Of Molecules and Men,**

Seattle: University of Washington Press 1966

Figure 5c. OPAC Explainer, cont'd.

On this page: [Introduction](#) | [using this resource](#) | [MARC record](#) | [to rest of site](#)

This image  at the end of any link indicates that the link takes you off the McClure/Manzarek metasite.


## For Librarians

As detailed in [About This Site](#), this is a substantial portion of my master's thesis in Library and Information Science from San Jose State University, California. It is intended as an exploration of using the techniques of the Internet to create a reference pathfinder -- to quote the Proposal, full text of which will be posted soon in PDF format:

One of the librarian's oldest and most basic tools is the reference pathfinder. ALA's glossary defines these as "bibliographic guides that arrange in search-strategy order the various types of library resources available for doing a literature search on particular topics" A good pathfinder will not only familiarize the user with the resources available, but with the scope and structure of the topic itself. It assists the user in clarifying such questions as "What do I really want to know about this? How much do I want to know? What will be enough? What new aspects of the topic are revealed that I didn't know about?" Finally, since the pathfinder is the result of selection and evaluation of resources by an information professional, it can direct the user to the best of the available information. [Falcon, 1998]

Like the traditional printed pathfinders many libraries make available beside their OPAC terminals or (if any survive) card catalogs, this website could be presented as the answer to inquiries about McClure and Manzarek -- both the "where are they now/what ever became of...?" questions of library patrons familiar with McClure's work in the Beat heyday and Manzarek's with The Doors, and the "where did these dudes come from? I want more!" posed by the younger, less print-oriented audiences of their performances together.

Those audiences fall directly within the age group least likely to think of libraries as resources for filling their information needs, according to:

Buildings, Books, and Bytes:  Libraries and Communities in the Digital Age (the Benton Foundation Report).

By pointing out on the Internet (their information resource of first choice) that some material, such as out-of-print books, may exist only in libraries, and offering them tools to find it ([The OPAC Explainer](#) page), I hope to reacquaint at least some of them with what libraries have to offer. To quote the Proposal once more:

Figure 6a. "For Librarians" pages

The results of this exploration should be a useful addition to the library community's knowledge base on using the Internet as an extension of, and an advertisement for, the value-added services we have always performed.

What follows is, at present, a worksheet for the eventual catalog record. Once it's been reviewed by my thesis advisors and cataloging colleagues (thank you, Nancy Olson and Patricia Horn Fell), the page will be formally cataloged and its MARC record available to any library that does catalog online resources. If you do include McClure/Manzarek in your catalog, please let me know at [webmaven@mcclure-manzarek.com](mailto:webmaven@mcclure-manzarek.com). Thanks for participating in this phase of my thesis project.

(back to top)

OCLC:	NEW	Rec State:	n		
Entered:	19990217	Replaced:	19990217	Used:	19990217
Type:	m	ELvl	Src:	d	Aud
Blvl:	m	File:	i	Gpb:	
Desc:	a			Ctrl	Lang: eng
				Mrec:	Ctry: cau
				DtSt:	Dates: 1999

1	007		c	tb	r	td	c	te	n	tf	a
2	100	1	Falcon, Jo								
3	245	14	The Michael McClure/Ray Manzarek Metasite #h [computer file] / #c Jo Falcon.								
4	246		McClure/Manzarek								
5	256		Computer text, sound and image data								
6	260		San Francisco, Calif.: #b Jo Falcon #c 1999.								
7	310		Updated weekly.								
8	502		Thesis (MLIS) - San Jose State University (California), 1999.								
9	504		Includes bibliographic records and discographies.								
10	505	00	Michael McClure -- Ray Manzarek -- Third Mind (their collaborative project.								
11	516		Website index page.								
12	538		Available on the Internet; some subdirectories may require plugins such as Quicktime, RealAudio, and ImagePlayer.								
13	500		Description based on title from index page as of February 17, 1999.								
14	500		#a Maintained by: Jo Falcon ( <a href="mailto:webmaven@mcclure-manzarek.com">webmaven@mcclure-manzarek.com</a> )								
15	520	0	Reference pathfinder for the works of poet Michael McClure and composer Ray Manzarek, with links to library holdings and a schedule of their spoken word/piano improvisation performances together.								
16	600	1	McClure, Michael.								
17	600	1	Manzarek, Ray.								
18	610	20	Doors (musical group).								
19	650	0	Beat Generation #z California #z San Francisco.								
20	650	0	Music and literature.								
21	650	0	Poetry #v Discography.								
22	650	0	Poetry, Modern #y 20th Century.								
23	650	0	#a Piano music (Jazz).								
24	650	0	Improvisation (music).								
25	650	0	Artistic collaboration.								
26	856	4	#u <a href="http://mcclure-manzarek.com">http://mcclure-manzarek.com</a>								

Figure 6b. "For Librarians", cont'd .

interface design issues and accessibility for users of assistive technology, it ran to over four screens of information (Figure 7).


It is a truism that most users will not scroll beyond the first screen. In fact, most users will tell you so. However, research and testing by UIE have established that even those individuals who believed they would not did indeed scroll down – so long as there was some indication, early in the page, of what they could expect to find (Spool, 1998). With that in mind, I gave each page a “table of contents” navigation bar at the top which included the major features of the page and a link to the site-wide navigation table at page bottom. It appears to be effective: one user (Gitlin, 3/22/99) wrote specifically to say “I love your discussion of the site and search problems, very helpful... I have bookmarked the site for future reference.” The discussion he refers to is more than halfway down this lengthy page.

An unexpected bonus of this design decision has been that when the URL of a particular page is returned by a search engine, the page table of contents appears in the search result, giving the user a helpful preview of what the page includes and how it may answer the query. This was discovered during a check of the major search engines shortly after the site was announced via Starting Point, as detailed below.

## **B. Alpha Testing with Librarians**

It was inevitable that the project be discussed exhaustively with fellow SJSU SLIS students (and some instructors) from the earliest part of the conceptualization process. As

On this page: [Introduction](#) | [Overview](#) | [Deeper](#) | [Design Decisions](#) | [Testing and Feedback](#) | [Credits](#) | [to rest of site](#)

This image  at the end of any link indicates that the link takes you off the McClure/Manzarek metasite.

# About This Site

Warning — longwinded and attitudinal.  
If you don't read the whole thing, at least  
fill out the Feedback Form. Please.

## Welcome to my Masters' thesis!

If it doesn't feel like one, so much the better. The informality and engaging quality of the Web is one reason I think it can be used to lead people back into libraries — which have an unearned reputation as stuffy. Only to someone who hasn't been in a library lately...

— But that, unfortunately, includes a lot of people. Maybe you, if you're between 18 and 24 — the group a recent survey found statistically least likely to think of libraries as having the information you need. First choice would be to ask a friend, second choice, the Internet — libraries are 'way down there.

Let's take some time out before I make too many assumptions.  
Please give me some feedback before reading the rest of this page.

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## Overview

In the case of artists like Michael McClure, who's been publishing since 1956, libraries may be the *only* place to find his earlier work. Some of the poetry he and Ray Manzarek perform in concert comes from *Rebel Lions* (1984) and *Selected Poems* (1986), but a few pieces go back far earlier. And those books won't be available at Amazon.com or the other online bookstores.

But you *can* find out of print books at libraries, along with those that are not mass market titles — a category that includes most poetry. And if your local library doesn't have what you're looking for, you may be able to get it through interlibrary loan. Forget printed card catalogs: many libraries are moving to web-based, graphical OPACs, Online Public Access Catalogs of a library's holdings — to a Nethead, searchable much more easily and in many different ways than the traditional printed card catalog.

Because the other great thing about libraries is cataloging. Librarians are information specialists, and catalogers are the hackers and programmers of the library world. Take a look

Figure 7a. "About this site" pages

at the "For Librarians" page of this site and click on MaRC record on the top navigation bar for an inside look at a catalog record. (MARC stands for **M**Achine **R**eadable **C**ataloging record — the form in which data for a particular book or other item is stored so that it can be downloaded by any OPAC, despite the many different systems out there. A little like the way HTML displays on many browsers, but differently on each.)

Extreme, yes? But every piece of information in that record is coded for exactly what *kind* of information it is. Most web search engines pick up your search term anywhere it appears on the web page, no matter how minor the reference. That's how you end up with 8,563,130 hits on "Michael McClure" (actual example from AltaVista, 2/24/99) some of which seem to have no logical reason for showing up and the rest of which mention McClure only as one of a list of friends of Kerouac or Ginsberg.

But MaRC records are **metadata** — information *about* the information in the book (or other form of information. We catalog websites, too). Better yet, the information is determined according to firm standards by a professional who is not about to misdirect your search by spamming. Since the goal in much of the Web world is to get as many hits on your page as possible, some web page designers can and will use amazingly dirty tricks to get you to a site that may have nothing to do with what you wanted. (One porno site that came up on a search for McClure and Manzarek used a long list of celebrities' names, printed in the same shade of blue as the background, so that you couldn't see them but a search engine would.)

(back to top)

### Deeper into the Rationale:

For someone who can do effective Web searches (as distinct from surfing), searching an OPAC is simpler — and more powerful. If you feel overwhelmed by Web searching, OPACs can be a lot easier: for one thing, you're not dealing with such a vast universe of information. And librarians will not spam you — guaranteed.

Depending on the particular OPAC software, you may be able to search in a particular part of the catalog record — like the table of contents, which are entered as MaRC Field 505. In a library with a strong music section, for example, you could find a particular song by Ray Manzarek whether it was on a Doors album, CD, tape, or flat plastic record, a cover version by another band, a single track in a Sixties compilation, or the soundtrack of the Doors movie.

To use examples from the OPAC at my alma mater, San Jose State University's School of Library and Information Science, a search by author for "McClure, Michael " gets you 16 records, including books by other people for whom he wrote introductions. The same search by keyword looks at different parts of the record and finds him in an anthology of six Beat poets. Try it yourself at Clark Library at SJSU

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### Design Decisions

Figure 7b. "About this site," cont'd .



You may have noticed that in most cases, I've put links on the left margin, either at the beginning of the paragraph or on a separate line, like the example above. This makes them easier to find for blind or partially-sighted computer users than links embedded in the middle of the text. In fact, many screen-reading programs, braille conversion systems, and other forms of assistive technology tear apart the web page at the source level, pull out the links and rebuild the page, arranging all the links on the left margin so the user can just scan down, rather than "reading" every word on the page to find the links. (For older users or those with partial vision, I've made the base font larger than standard for ease of reading.)

This also makes it easier on text-only systems. Don't laugh: there are still plenty out there, especially in under-funded public libraries and schools. That was also the reason for avoiding frames, Java, and other special effects that don't work with a low-end system.

Low-end systems are why one of the first design decisions I made was NO BLACK BACKGROUNDS. For one thing, you can't print them out: white letters on white paper are, shall we say, less than legible. For another, colors vary from one computer system to another (let alone from one terminal to another!) and the saturated colors that seem okay against a black background on the designer's desktop may blend right into that background on the user's. The color scheme of the McClure/Manzarek pages uses fairly high contrast, and avoids the colors that pose problems for the colorblind. The blue/red/purple convention for ready, active and visited links is familiar to most users, and according to the User Interface Engineering group is the single most effective navigational aid in their extensive usability tests. And all these colors come from the "browser-safe" palette.

The better the web designer's system and tools, the less likely the end user is to see all that hard work display the way the designer intended. That's why I tested on a variety of platforms and equipment — Mac and DOS, Netscape and Microsoft Explorer and AOL, the fast machines on T-1 lines at the Exploratorium and the slow, text-only terminals at the San Francisco Public Library's North Beach branch. I gave you the sizes of multimedia files, but no prediction how long they would take to load, because I knew they would load differently on different systems — and you'll know what 1.3 MB means on the one you use.

But this doesn't mean I've caught all the possible elements of design that could cause problems for people using these pages. If you catch one, please let me know at [webmaven@mcclure-manzarek.com](mailto:webmaven@mcclure-manzarek.com)

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### Testing and Feedback

In fact, feedback on any aspect of the site — content, navigability, graphic design — is still needed, since this *is* an academic project. If you didn't fill out the feedback form at the first link, here's another opportunity:

[The Feedback Form, one more time](#)

This site is intended to be useful to people interested in Michael McClure and Ray Manzarek. If it's not, I need to know. It is not and doesn't pretend to be a Doors page. For accessibility reasons, it may never be flashy and "cool." But it should offer a solid grounding from which to

Figure 7c. "About this site," cont'd .

find more information on these artists. If you feel it's falling short, please tell me how.

Thanks for your input.

[\(back to top\)](#)

### Credits

This project was originally intended as a collaboration with Dinah Sanders of Metagrrl and Inkspot Books. I still wish we'd been able to work together. Several of the design concepts, especially the "you are leaving this site" icon, were inspired by her work.

<http://www.metagrrrl.com>

In the first two semesters of laying groundwork for this project, I participated in a class and then a seminar on human/computer interface issues with Alison Head, author of *Design Wise*. My research with Dr. Head on computing for the disabled strongly influenced accessibility design decisions for this site.

[Design Wise](#)

Nancy Olson, the oracle of cataloging non-book resources, encouraged me to include a MaRC record (and has added greatly to my understanding of MaRC) and Patricia Horn Fell ruthlessly checked and double-checked that record.

Much of the actual web page was built in the Learning Studio at the Exploratorium, with advice, feedback, and kibitzing from Rose Falanga, Deb Hunt, Ron Hipschman, and Laura Quilter, background music by Richard Brooks, and tai chi stretch breaks from Tania Chan. [The Learning Studio](#) (and don't miss the rest of the Exploratorium, the best science museum on or off the Web!)

[\(back to top\)](#)

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[About Ray Manzarek pages](#)

[McClure/Manzarek Home Page](#)

[About Michael McClure](#)

[For Librarians](#)

[About this site \(you are here\)](#)

[contact webmaven Jo Falcon](#)

[Site map](#)

Last updated 3/16/99

Visitor Count: 97

Figure 7d. "About this site", cont'd .

noted above, these informal discussions helped to provide a sense of what content would be required, in the opinions of practicing and prospective reference librarians. Input from the project committee included Dr. Terence Crowley's paraphrase of what has proved to be a very elusive quote from Patrick Wilson, to the effect that "the last thing most people want is a bibliography." In general, the less experienced librarians consulted took the desirability of a bibliography for granted, while the seasoned veterans felt it was an option rather than a requirement. Given this attitude, and the pressure of work on those parts of the site that were unquestionably necessary, I compromised by making a link to an existing though incomplete bibliography of McClure's work. The feedback form includes a space for comments on what additional features would have been useful: it will be interesting to see whether users actively request a bibliography.

Once the basic structure and primary pages were ready to mount on the Web, these colleagues and others offered feedback on the first few iterations before the site was announced to the general public. Interestingly, it was difficult to elicit feedback on the reference functions of the site, though almost every respondent wanted to critique the web design – an instance of form overcoming function. This raised some concern that I might have underestimated the importance of the "coolness" factor. If even this group, trained to distinguish between information and its carrier, was seduced by the graphic interface into valuing aesthetic appeal over content, what chance did the site stand with Internet users who have less patience with text? But in response to specific questions about how their patrons researched similar topics, librarians at such special collections as the North

Beach SFPL Beat Writers collection and California College of Arts & Crafts felt the website did cover the basics and provide direction for further investigation.

Still, this was only an expectation based on their familiarity with user query patterns. The next step was to involve actual end-users.

### **C. Beta Testing “Live” on the Web**

The first step in bringing the site to its larger public was to register it with the various search engines and indexes on the Web. Most of the search engines were covered by either Starting Point or LinkStar, services which forward the information submitted to some 300 search engines each (with a degree of duplication). In the case of HotBot, Lycos, AltaVista, Google, and Infoseek (among the “major players” as listed by Search Engine Watch, <http://www.searchenginewatch.com>) the URL was also submitted directly as a fail-safe measure. In most cases (i.e., with occasional filtering for pornographic or otherwise offensive sites), listing is automatic.

Registering with the major indexes (Yahoo, LookSmart, and Librarians’ Index to the Internet) is a rather lengthier process, since these review each site and decide whether it merits inclusion. The site has been offered to each of these indexes, but no acknowledgement has yet been received – and may not be. The Librarians’ Index, in particular, lists only the site it considers most useful in each category listed, the best database on the subject, one or two directories, and a handful of “specific resources.” If and when the McClure/Manzarek site shows up in “Poetry – Specific Resources,” it will be an honor – but one too late to be cited in this report. Yahoo and LookSmart already

reflect the site in their search engines, but not in a search of the most likely categories of the actual indexes. (For Yahoo, these were deemed to be Entertainment: Performing Artists, People: Poets, and People: Musicians; for LookSmart, Theatre: Improvisation.)

Not until beginning the registration process did I realize how difficult this site would be to categorize. The description of McClure/Manzarek offered with the URL submissions was "Poetry you can dance to – spoken word with improv piano in the Beat tradition, but more so. A librarian-organized pathfinder page." As a collaboration, the Third Mind work does not fit well in either "Music" or "Poetry," but the usual alternative offered by submit forms is "Performance Art." This term is difficult to define, but what one finds in this category in Yahoo tends toward far less traditional material. (One example, from March 24, 1999: "Writer's Block – an installation consisting of steel cages filled with typewriters from the 1920s and 30s.") In LookSmart, the nearest match is "Theatre: Improvisation," a category dominated by improv comedy and "theatersportz" competitions. It will be instructive to see where different indexes choose to locate the site.

Many search engines depend on density of links to other sites in order to "find" a new location on the web. Google, for example, is described as:

... a search engine that makes heavy use of link popularity as a primary way to rank web sites. This can be especially helpful in finding good sites in response to general searches such as "cars" and "travel," because users across the web have in essence voted for good sites by linking to them.

([www.searchenginewatch.com](http://www.searchenginewatch.com), 3/24/99, 7:43 am)

For this reason, I have also written directly to the webmasters of sites to which links are included in McClure/Manzarek, or whose users are likely to be interested in its content, suggesting an exchange of links: Literary Kicks, Bohemian Ink, the Light & Dust poetry

database, The Psychedelic Sixties, West Coast Live, and the Peter Coyote Home Page, among others. (Coyote narrated the Third Mind documentary film, and his home page contains what appears to be the only other reference to it on the web.) The cumulative effect of such linkages will take some time to develop fully, though some of the feedback discussed below under "Results" indicates that it has begun.

### **III. Results**

#### **A. Components of Project**

Section I above includes a list of items the site would include, and refers to certain other deliverables expected of the project as a whole. Circumstances have rendered some of these moot, and others have been altered in response to user feedback or lack thereof. Of the deliverables listed in the original Proposal, the items outstanding are an annotated bibliography/ URLography, a report on the North Beach/San Francisco Public Library trial, and an archive of e-mail to the site.

The bibliography ("the last thing most people want") has been put on hold pending feedback indicating that users feel a need for it. A link to the Literary Kicks partial bibliography of McClure's work, and a short list of the works quoted or referred to in the McClure main page and biography, provide information on the earlier, out-of-print works for which users may wish to search in libraries. This is sufficient to give users something on which to whet the OPAC-searching skills offered in the "OPAC Explainer" page of the site. A "quick reference" list of all the links contained in the site as a whole (including that partial bibliography), compiled on a single page and fully annotated to give users a better

idea what resources they will find at each, now appears to be a useful alternative. Besides being a convenience to repeat visitors, this would provide an overview and fast, easy access to the site for those using text-only browsers or assistive technology such as screen readers. In fact, this was suggested by a feature of the screen-reading program JAWS, which saves the disabled user the trouble of searching through text for links by reassembling the page, at the HTML level, arranging all the links alphabetically along the left margin. In this case, however, a subject index would clearly be more useful (though an alphabetical alternative version would be easy to create once the original form is complete).

A perhaps over-ambitious item was the proposed trial of the site at the North Beach branch of the San Francisco Public Library, which houses the Beat Writers Collection. At the time of the proposal, and indeed for some months previously, I had been negotiating this through a colleague at another branch of the library who had some “clout” with the web maintainer for SFPL. In mid-December, the plan was impeded in two ways. My contact made a career change that altered the lines of communication. More problematic, the entire SFPL website underwent a major redesign which included a collaboration with a commercial web presence, CitySearch7.com, for the home pages of the branch libraries – including North Beach. The formality of the new arrangement made it far more difficult to get authorization for a link from the restructured SFPL site to an experimental, unproven site like McClure/Manzarek. Though I have renewed the proposal through Gardner Haskell, curator of the Beat Writers Collection, and Mike Hoffman, who now maintains the in-house portion of the SFPL site, progress is slow.

Meanwhile, a poster/printout of the McClure/Manzarek index page has been displayed at the OPAC terminals in the North Beach branch for the convenience of those using the Beat Collection, and origin points for email to this site are being checked for the North Beach address. On-site observation of users was abandoned as too uncertain and unproductive compared with other methods of gathering feedback.

A synopsis and log of archived e-mail, however, is included here as Figure 8, below. Items are annotated as to whether they were in response to the preliminary call for feedback to the test group, to its announcement on the "New Sites" lists of the two registration utilities, to the site itself, or to word of mouth (from someone other than the site developer). Since e-mail will continue to be added to the attachment as late as practicable until this report is turned in, thus probably after the writing is completed, a statistical breakdown will not be attempted except in the most general terms.

Of the site components, most have been implemented as planned and are functioning appropriately. To review:

1. a "front door" based on the McClure/Manzarek performances, which would include a concert schedule, audio and perhaps video footage; done, at the index and schedule pages.
2. a small, well-chosen group of links to such sites as the Electronic Poetry Center, Literary Kicks, and the archive of McClure's work at Simon Fraser University; done, at the McClure main page. (Manzarek, though peripheral to the library content of the site, has an equivalent set of links appropriate to his oeuvre at his main page.)



3. an annotated evaluative bibliography and URLography; for the reasons stated above, to be replaced by a "quick reference" set of annotated links.

4. brief tutorials on how to locate and use OPACs; done, at "About this site" and the external pages to which it refers.

5. a sample MARC record for the site as a whole, available for adoption into the OPAC of any library that chooses to catalog electronic resources; done, at the "For Librarians" page.

6. as appropriate on sub-pages, clickable links to meta-information for librarians; done, as the single "For Librarians" page.

7. unobtrusive "hit counters" on pages within the site, to monitor what portions of it are being used most heavily; done, by placing the counters far below the apparent end of the page where they do not demand attention.

8. a feedback section in which to solicit readers' and librarians' comments on their experience with this tool, and suggestions for its refinement. This seemed premature until the two March 20<sup>th</sup> concerts at which McClure announced the website: one on national public radio, one to a live audience including editors of several Beat-related periodicals and e-zines. The increase in e-mail was immediately apparent and, since some of these journals have further publicized the site, will probably accelerate. Creation of a bulletin board page to which e-mail can be posted automatically and sorted by thread is the next order of business after completion of this written report.

With the exception, then, of the item which should have been seen as dependent on elements outside the project designer's control, the major deliverables of the Proposal have been or are being met.

## **B. Feedback**

The most basic information, number of visitors to the site, has been captured by counters on each page. Since the purpose of these counters is not simply racking up a high total of "hits" but seeing which portions of the site are most heavily used, they have been made unobtrusive by placing them far below the apparent "end" of each page. As would be expected, the "front page" has received the greatest number of visits, 610 at final proofreading of this document. Nearly 160 of these came in the week leading up to the two March 20<sup>th</sup> concerts, probably in part due to the link from the schedule page of the website for West Coast Live, the radio program on which McClure and Manzarek were featured that morning.

Each artist's main page shows approximately 160 hits. The nearly equal numbers are interesting. In retrospect, it would have been useful to find a way of tracking whether individual users visited both the McClure and Manzarek pages, or went only to the one for whom they had been searching when they found the site. This is probably possible, but beyond the technical expertise available at this point. "About this site," the long and challenging page which explains the rationale for this project and contains the link to the feedback form, had received 102 hits as of proofreading date. And the OPAC Explainer page, containing the discussion of finding print resources in libraries, showed some 70 hits. It must be emphasized again that numbers for the sake of numbers are not the point:

if this were "just another website," with the goal of drawing the largest visitor count possible by whatever means, much of the design work and none of the cataloging would have been necessary – indeed, some examples of website promotion below would suggest that cataloging ethics are antithetical to web practice.

As described below under "Obstacles," more articulated feedback (in the shape of e-mail and feedback forms) was slow to begin, tended to address form rather than function, and was less focused than had been hoped. Lack of technical expertise meant that the CGI feedback form (with specifically targeted questions) took far longer than anticipated to be made operational, and that data gathered automatically by the host computer's monitoring systems could not easily be accessed. Nevertheless, a total of 51 items of e-mail feedback (not including communications with advisors) were received in February and March to date, roughly categorizable as follows:

- 22+ solicited from Alpha test group (librarians, poets, and internet professionals; some messages in this set were lost to a software crash)

- 4 responses to automated announcements from registration utilities

- 14 word-of-mouth or secondary responses from friends of the subjects or other referring persons (other than this author)

- 5 from targeted announcements such as those to the Subterraneans listserv, the two concert audiences, and libraries with Beat collections

- 5 from unexpected tangential sources.

Of this last group, the most interesting were the inquiries from a scholar at NYU who is writing "a serious article on the history of the bagel in the United States for the journal *Social Research*." She found the site while following a reference to the Co-Existence

Bagel Shop in the article "North Beach Beats On," linked from the biography and context section of the McClure page.

A synopsis of responses to the site follows as Figure 8. Sample e-mail which made specific references to the utility of the website as a reference resource included the following:

Hi there! I checked out your page and I thought it was pretty cool... I like the theme and I love the idea of telling which links go to offsite sites (does that make sense?!?)! I haven't totally checked it out yet but it looks great and since I like all of the things it encompasses (I don't know if that's the word I mean to use) I like the site! Thanks for a great way to pass time!

M. Smallwood, a 17-year-old "neo-Beatnik" in Seattle  
Wed, 24 Feb 1999 17:15:43 -0800

What I like about m-m.com:

North Beach Beats On, especially the first sentence.  
How will you be able to keep the calendar up to date?  
Every page is titled and has keywords for search engines.  
It loads fast.  
Big files are identified by size.  
Multimedia files are usually identified by required plug-in.  
The page title in uncial font.  
Images are small and color reduced.  
Attractive pebbly background.

What needs improvement:

The table at the bottom ... looks like Manzarek index is for librarians and McClure index is about this site.

A. Schuman, software engineer, Palo Alto  
Mon, 1 Mar 1999 17:25:38 -0800  
[the suggested changes have been made.]

Joe, just found the McClure/Manzarek site. Well done. I know Levi Asher had a page but this is more in depth. Any ideas where I might get a copy of Love Lion CD?

K. Ring, beatscene magazine  
Wed, 17 Mar 1999 09:48:04 -0600

What fun! and what good work, too. I am only a desultory fan of Manzarek, but I was fascinated to see what he was doing now. The pages read very clearly on my screen, the links are well set up, and – goddess be praised – you included a site map, which I would make a requirement!

I believe I visited all of your pages; I like the indicator for what will take you offsite. I am going to go back to do those.

G. DeCandido, former editor of Library Journal  
Sun, 21 Mar 1999 17:35:23 -0500

I love the McClure/Manzarek web page. It's great to get fresh news about these exciting artists--and the links allow deeper considerations to arise. I plan to return to it regularly. Keep up the good work!

J. Foley, historian of the beat movement  
Thu, 25 Mar 1999 17:40:33 EST

You have [stretched the meaning of the site] by the links you have provided, sure, but additionally by the \*content\* itself—which is itself a kind of star field of options which deepen our appreciation. The levels are many and impressive to me: there is the deepening of appreciation for the artists you represent (for we are given the layers of their presence, so to speak: past books, present performance schedule, poem of the week, and an understanding of the potential difficulty and randomness of having your [McClure's--or any other] work located/reported on an OPAC); there is deepened appreciation for the complexity... of the librarian's task and undertaking; there is this self-reflective nod and rightful acknowledgment that \*internet sites\* too must (ought to be) given catalog records--for access and for the on-going archive of bibliography which identifies for us the history of our reading and our attempts at innovation and expression.

P. Money, poet/librarian  
Sat, 27 Mar 1999 16:44:42 EST

McClure/Manzarek Website:  
Feedback By Date of E-mail

Key to Groups: Alpha = first brainstorming group of librarians, poets, web designers. Auto = responding to automated announcement of URL. Lists = responding to announcements on Subterraneans or other listserv, or to interested libraries. Refer = referred to page by someone other than project author. "Strays" = unexpected, unpredictable, or not a fit for other categories.				
Group	Name	Date/Time	About	Comments:
Alpha	Bacchetti, Marina	[inadvertently deleted]	Reference, Cataloging	Positive, no suggestions
Alpha	Rankin, Gratia	[inadvertently deleted]	Web design	Found one bad link
Refer	Smallwood, Matt	02/24/99 17:15:43 -0800	Content	(quoted in paper)
Alpha	Clarke, Lani	02/26/99 19:41:28 -0800	Content, cataloging	"graphical presentation is excellent"
Alpha	Clarke, Lani	02/26/99 19:47:49 -0800	Web design	Found typo, font error
Alpha	Clarke, Lani	02/26/99 19:55:08 -0800	Cataloging	
Alpha	Clarke, Lani	02/26/99 20:05:29 -0800	Cataloging	(quoted in paper)
Auto	Uwe Buhm	03/01/99 12:27:08 +0100	Content	Invitation to join web ring
Refer	Schuman, Aaron	03/01/99 17:25:38 -0800	Web design	(quoted in paper)
Refer	Schuman, Aaron	03/01/99 17:50:38 -0800	Web design	
Refer	Schuman, Aaron	03/01/99 18:37:38 -0800	Web design	
Auto	Langton, Steven	03/03/99 04:04:34 -0600	Content	"send Ray my demo tape"
Alpha	Fell, Pat	03/03/99 11:53:37 -0600	Cataloging	MARC corections
Alpha	Sanders, Dinah	03/05/99 16:55:31 -0800	Reference	ASCII code for emdash
Refer	Smallwood, Matt	03/06/99 23:16:08 -0800	Content, Web design	17-yr-old son of poet Mark Smallwood
Alpha	Head, Alison	03/09/99 19:21:21 -0800	Web design, Reference	Suggests relocation of sections
Alpha	Head, Alison	03/11/99 17:58:01 -0800	Web design, Reference	Navigational suggestions
Alpha	Head, Alison	03/12/99 07:29:29 -0800	Web design, Reference	Video download link, disclaimers
Alpha	Sanders, Dinah	03/14/99 15:14:36 -0800	Web design	Navigation suggestions
Alpha	Sanders, Dinah	03/14/99 17:01:50 -0800	Web design	Navigation suggestions
Alpha	Sanders, Dinah	03/15/99 12:37:37 -0800	Web design	Re e-mail channelling
Alpha	Head, Alison	03/17/99 07:36:17 -0800	Web design, Reference	Correct link to HCI resource
Auto	Langton, Steven	03/17/99 09:48:04 -0600	Content	"send Ray my demo tape"
Lists	Ring, Kevin	03/17/99 09:48:04 -0000	Content	Needs LoveLion CD
Auto	Langton, Steven	03/17/99 10:04:56 -0600	Content	"send Ray my demo tape"
Alpha	DeCandido, GraceAnne	03/18/99 09:42:40 -0500	General	
Lists	Ring, Kevin	03/18/99 14:34:29 -0000	Content	Editor, BeatScene UK
Alpha	Luskin, Merri	03/19/99 10:56:38 -0800		Survey form

Figure 8a. Synopsis of responses

Lists	Ring, Kevin	03/19/99 22:03:46 -0000	Content	LoveLion CD
Strays	Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara	03/21/99 10:45:42 +0100		Sociologist: Coexistence Bagel Shop
Alpha	DeCandido, GraceAnne	03/21/99 17:35:23 -0500	Web design, Reference	Positive, likes sitemap
Lists	Corse, Jack	03/22/99 08:58:42 -0800	Content	McClure Archive
Refer	Aiello, John	03/22/99 12:04:45 -0800	Content	Chron reptr, wrote pullquote
Refer	Nelson, Paul	03/22/99 17:13:25 -0800	Content	SPLAB! NW schedule
Refer	Gitlin, David	03/22/99 22:28:48 -0800	Content	Am. Lit. prof.
Alpha	Fell, Pat	03/23/99 06:55:38 -0800	Cataloging	
Lists	Bridwell, Eugene	03/23/99 08:26:40 -0800	Content	McClure Archive
Refer	Aiello, John	03/23/99 12:11:10 -0800	Content	
Refer	Smith, W. Tyler	03/23/99 13:36:58 +0000	Content	Director of 3 <sup>rd</sup> Mind
Refer	Nelson, Paul	03/23/99 13:58:36 -0800	Content	SPLAB! NW schedule
Refer	Aiello, John	03/23/99 15:23:17 -0800	Content	
Refer	Aiello, John	03/23/99 16:48:14 -0800	Content	
Alpha	Fell, Pat	03/24/99 07:38:22 -0800	Cataloging	
Strays	Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara	03/24/99 10:44:01 +0100		Sociologist/bagels
Strays	Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara	03/24/99 10:48:08 +0100		Sociologist/bagels
Lists	McGowin, Keven	03/24/99 14:15:33 -0500	Content	Subterraneans list
Alpha	Fell, Pat	03/24/99 15:11:56 -0800	Cataloging	
Strays	Smith, Mitchell	03/24/99 18:07:35 -0800	Content	Saw URL on concert poster; survey form
Strays	Foley, Jack	03/25/99 17:40:33	Content	Beat historian, heard URL at concert
Refer	Smith, W. Tyler	03/27/99 07:55:51 +0000	Content	New info 3 <sup>rd</sup> Mind film
Alpha	Money, Peter	03/27/99 16:44:42 -0800	Cataloging, Reference, Content	(quoted in paper)

Figure 8b. Responses, cont'd.

What is most clearly missing is negative feedback. Surely some of those hundreds of visitors to the site found it less than satisfying, but none of these took the time to offer suggestions that might make it more so. While recognizing that the dissatisfied were less likely to take the time for a response, I counted on two features of the Internet to provide at least a few dissenting voices: the tendency to "flame" the source of a disappointment, and the willingness of anyone with some web design skill to critique and dissect another's website. Neither these, nor the built-in negative responses possible on the CGI feedback form, have produced such comment.

The feedback has been, to quote a song from Manzarek's earlier work, "narrow and hard to master," but as the site continues to attract visitors, who then tell others, the flow of responses is increasing. As noted, a definite increase in e-mail followed the two March 20<sup>th</sup> concerts; and it included the information that a link had been made from the "Kerouac Connection" magazine/e-zine site. As the description of Google, above, indicates, the multiplier effect of reciprocal links is a significant factor in making a site "visible" to search engines. This new link, and the others expected in the near future, can be anticipated to increase the quantity of visitors and feedback; the improved automated feedback form and the bar graph it generates (Figures 9a and 9b) should improve its quality (or at least its relevance).

### **C. Obstacles**

As mentioned above under "Design," this project was originally framed as a collaboration with Dinah Sanders, with a clear division of labor between the technical



## Survey

What's your age bracket? Here's a list echoing those used in the survey I quoted about 18-to-24 year olds and libraries.

18-24

25-35

35-49

50-65

over 65

Do you use libraries?

Never

Sometimes, like once a month or so

Frequently, weekly or so

Obsessively, two or three times a week

When you have the kind of question this site answers (who's McClure, where did he come from, when's the next concert, where can I find more poems like this), what do you do to find out?

Ask friends with similar interests

Search the Web

Look up the answers on my own, in print sources

Ask a reference librarian or other professional

Other:

What?

What brought you to the McClure/Manzarek Metasite:

Heard about it from a friend

Heard about it from a librarian or teacher

Heard about it at a concert/saw the URL on a concert poster

Searching for Michael McClure

Searching for Ray Manzarek

Figure 9a(1). Feedback survey form

Searching for something more general, like "poetry with jazz"

What was your search?

Followed a link from another site

What was that site?

I'm interested in the site because of

Michael McClure

Ray Manzarek

The Third Mind collaboration

Jim Morrison. You cheated me!

Allen Ginsberg. You cheated me!

The Beats in general

Psychedelic rock music in general

Performance poetry/poetry slams

Other:

What?

Did the site answer your questions about Michael McClure?

Yes, just what I wanted

No, Not enough information

Too much information, overload or boring

Plenty of info, but not what I came for. I want to know about

What?

Did the site answer your questions about Ray Manzarek, given that it's NOT a Doors site?

Yes, just what I wanted

No, Not enough information

Too much information, overload or boring

Plenty of info, but not what I came for. I want to know about

Figure 9a(2). Survey form, cont'd.

What?

Which pages were most useful?

Michael McClure main page and biography

Ray Manzarek main page and biography

Third Mind reviews and comments

Concert schedule

Book list and how to use an OPAC

Are you likely to bookmark or come back to the site?

Yes, for the concert schedule only

Yes, for the poem of the week

Yes, for the general information and references

Probably not

Not very likely.

Other comments:

Figure 9a(3). Survey form, cont'd.

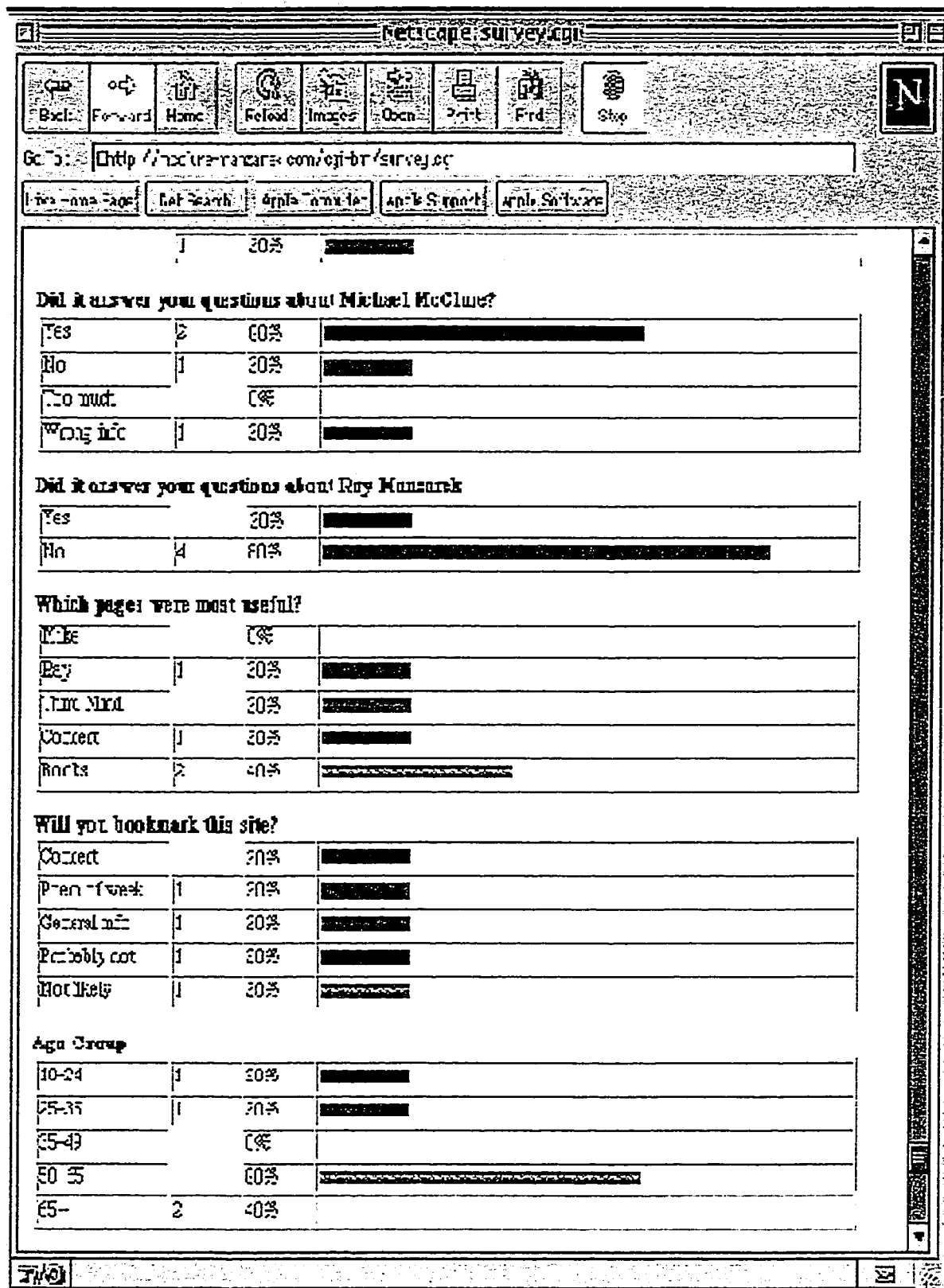


Figure 9b. Feedback response graph

design and development of the site (her task) and its intellectual content (mine). By the time it became clear that scheduling complications would prevent us from working together, I was too invested in the concept of a pathfinder website to give it up. Familiar but not intimate with the principles of web design, I underestimated a number of technical factors. The site counter, the routing of e-mail, review of the automatic status reports generated by the host computer, all required learning on the fly what a more technical person would already have mastered. On-line help from the host company was minimal, a downside of that \$5/month budget plan. Development of the CGI script for the feedback form, as noted, was farmed out to a computer professional, William E. Spears. A task-specific team like the one originally proposed would have made shorter work of the project, and probably achieved a more satisfactory result.

Also underestimated was the seductiveness of the medium. It was all too easy to become absorbed in the never-ending quest to perfect the visual and navigational aspects of the site, to the neglect of the content. Nor was I alone in this. As mentioned earlier, colleagues also found it more inviting to critique the site design than to offer feedback on the reference functions, and too many of their suggestions were for features that might be appropriate in a recreational or commercial website, but did not fit the stated goals of this one. If nothing else, this confirms that the medium is more attractive than the traditional printed pathfinder – whether it delivers content or not.

Lack of content was the outstanding characteristic of a website that repeatedly came up for the search +"Michael McClure" +"Ray Manzarek." Steve's Hair Page (a personal website showing the owner with crewcut, long hair, with and without a

moustache, etc.) is introduced with "the statistics say that 93% of the Web is 'useless dribble' – so I am hereby adding more photos and narratives to the dribble of glut that clogs the Information Superhighway!" The site turned out to include a photo of Ray Manzarek autographing an album. Perhaps link density and status as a "Top 5% Most Useless Site on the Internet" accounts for why this URL is returned as more relevant for that search than McClure/Manzarek.

Another site consistently returned by search engines, for even less apparent reason, was a pornographic site with no apparent verbal content. This was a real puzzle till I accidentally highlighted the blue background – and found the names of a long list of celebrities, including McClure and Manzarek, printed in the same shade of blue.

Cataloger's ethics, and the difficulty of competing with the strategies less scrupulous sites use to attract searchers, exacerbated a slow start in getting the word out. Because the web is so fast in transmitting many kinds of information – spam, virus hoaxes and urban legends as well as news, e-journals, reference requests, and more useful matters – it was a surprise to find how long the registration process takes for many of the search engines. True, the announcement services like LinkStar and Starting Point broadcast the newly-registered domain name almost immediately. But the search engines take far longer to absorb an URL into their networks: six weeks in the case of LookSmart, up to six months for Google. And the indexes decline to state an estimated time it may take for a new site to be accepted and categorized. In retrospect, it seems that as much as five or six months from the site's official launch may be necessary before it is sufficiently absorbed

into the web to be picked up by search engines and achieve the flow of feedback originally envisioned for this project.

#### **IV. Conclusions and Projections**

Whether or not the web can be an appropriate medium for a reference pathfinder, it is not a particularly useful one for getting a full range of responses for the kind of questions listed in the survey form that is a part of this website. The direct responses from librarians indicated their feeling that the site would be a useful resource, but that seems likely to be confirmed only by longer periods of actual use. More advanced technological tools, particularly a sophisticated analysis of the automatic status reports generated by the host computer, will be needed to see whether the same users are logging in repeatedly, which are logging back off at once, whether log-ins originate from .edu or public library addresses, and what other linked websites are sending users to McClure/Manzarek. The bulletin board proposed as a way to gather and "thread" questions and comments should, in time, provide a better sense of the user base and of whether the site is reaching the audience originally hoped for. Adoption into the Web OPAC of a library whose collection development policy warrants it, as mentioned on the "For Librarians" page, would be an ideal next phase; letters to several such libraries are the next order of business after the above-listed improvements to the site are complete. I intend to continue maintaining this site and gathering whatever data are available about its use as a reference pathfinder, on the assumption that momentum will continue to build and more feedback become available as the search engines, and the user grapevine, discover the site.

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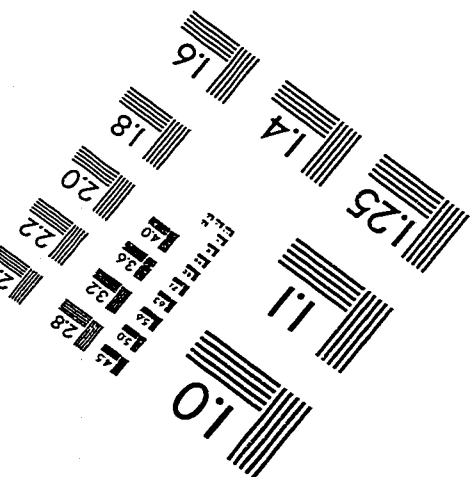
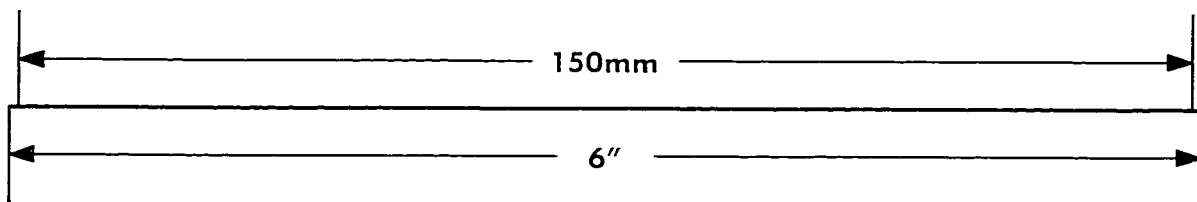
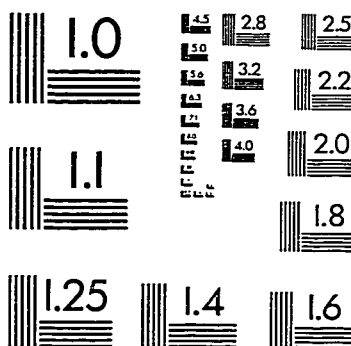
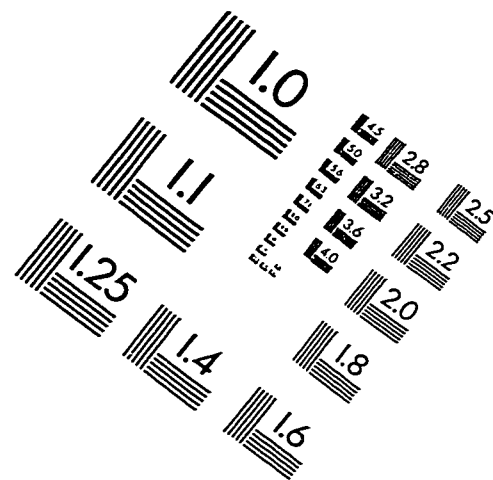
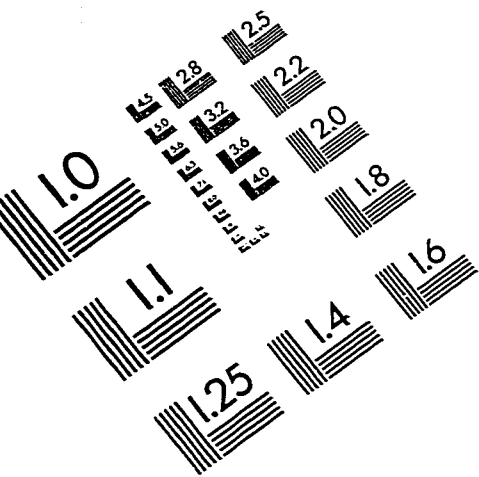
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# IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)



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